

**Boise District (BD) Bureau of Land Management (BLM)  
Resource Advisory Council (RAC)  
Marsing Community Center  
Marsing, Idaho  
February 8, 2005**

**Minutes**

**Council Members Present:**

Don Weilmunster, Donna Griffin, Robert Amidon, Jon Robison, Richard Raymondi, Donna Bennett, Sandra Mitchell, Ted Howard, Gilbert Green, Robert Baker, Chris Salove, Brenda Richards.

**Council Members Absent:**

Neil Rimbey, Ken Reid, Patric Cudmore.

**BLM Advisory Present:**

Glen Secrist, Boise District Manager; MJ Byrne, Public Affairs Specialist and BD RAC Coordinator.

**Other BLM Staff Present:**

Rosey Thomas, Four Rivers Field Office Manager; Mitch Jaurena, Bruneau FO Manager; Ron Kay, Owyhee FO Manager; Frank Jenks, BD Outdoor Recreation Planner; Andy Delmus, Acting District Fire Manager.

**Other:** Russ Heughins, Al Logosz, Jim Nunley, Tom Ineca, and Becky Desmond as note taker.

**Statements attributed to individuals are not direct quotes unless so indicated.**

**Council Business, General Information, and Opening Remarks:**

Chairman Weilmunster brought the meeting to order at 9:15 am. Sandra Mitchell moved and John Robison seconded to certify the minutes of the October 26, 2004 meeting with no additions or corrections. The group approved and those minutes were then certified.

**Election of Officers:**

It was determined there was a quorum. Sandra Mitchell moved and Ted Howard seconded to nominate Don Weilmunster as Chairman. Robert Baker moved and Donna Bennett seconded to close the nominations. Don accepted the nomination. All motions were passed. Mr. Baker moved and Robert Amidon seconded the nomination of Donna Griffin to the position of Vice-Chairman. She accepted the nomination, and no one else was put forth. The motion passed.

## **Subcommittee Reports and Related Issue Presentations**

### **A. Resource Management Plans**

Rosey Thomas, BLM's Four Rivers Field Manager, representing Mike O'Donnell, Team Leader for development of the two Resource Management Plans (RMPs), handed out a schedule for the Snake River Birds of Prey RMP. She said the time for RAC participation and comments was approximately between the release of the final Draft to the public on September 9, 2005 and the Estimation of Effects on July 14, 2006. She suggested the January 2006 RAC meeting as a logical one to discuss this RMP. MJ Byrne, RAC Coordinator, recommended that the RAC request a briefing before then.

Mitch Jaurena discussed the Bruneau RMP. He did a cover-to-cover review of the plan, and requested more work addressing discrepancies in the Areas of Critical Environmental Concern's. Faced with budget limitations that gave him the choice of finishing the RMP but turning back \$178,000 of EPS money, or keeping that money (and permanent staff positions) and finishing up Standards and Guides work on 300,000 acres, he said he opted for the latter. He requested a six-month delay on the RMP from K Lynn Bennett. Mr. Jaurena hopes the actual delay will be more like four months. He plans to turn the rewrites and reviews over to the contractor, URS who is doing the analysis on the alternatives in the EIS, by October 1, 2005. A positive note on the delay is that URS will have valuable experience in writing the Birds of Prey RMP by then. Glen Secrist mentioned that the combination of the next two "tough" budget years, the rush to get Owyhee allotment grazing decisions out by Judge Winmill's timeline, the Nickle Creek litigation, and the reduction of 25 temporary staffers to 3 or 4 has kept the newly reformed field offices quite busy.

In answer to some questions from Ted Howard, Mr. Secrist said there would be no staff lay-offs, just some re-arranging. He also said the splitting of the field offices did not require more money to run because it enables one office to mainly concentrate on court-ordered work (from Judge Winmill), and the other to work on standards and guides for the allotments. Mr. Howard also mentioned that the BLM budget requests had some topics that required consultation with the tribes, such as trafficking of cultural objects, vandalism, etc. and stated that the tribes want to continue their partnership with BLM. Mr. Jaurena replied that he intends to continue as before-- consult and partner-up with the tribes-- and is only looking at cost-efficiencies. Mr. Secrist said that Lynn Miracle's ranger position in Duck Valley will continue until he leaves to take his new BLM law enforcement position in Oregon. It was reported this vacancy will not be filled until the next fiscal year due to budget reductions.

Mr. Baker wondered if the "vastly different" RMP procedures, involving so many public meetings, were worth it. He felt the public meetings he has gone to seemed to be attended by "professional lobbyists" rather than by the general public. Mr. Jaurena thinks the jury is still out but both he and Mr. Secrist said the BLM has no choice in this "philosophical argument." If the procedure stretches out years and years, it is too long,

but the people are interested and want to have input into this decision-making process. He said it is both challenging and frustrating to try to find the middle ground between efficiency and public involvement. Mr. Baker also thanked the new field managers and staff for their willingness to get involved in the field. As an example, he pointed out that during the Snail Biological Assessment, there was “good and healthy” interaction between the biologists with the scientific knowledge but little ground experience, and the “non-biologists” with the ground experience but not as much scientific knowledge.

Ms. Thomas pointed out that the delay in the RMP’s does not nullify the contracts for them. That money is still available. She also said the scheduled 2008 re-write for the Four Rivers Plan should benefit from the writing of the other two plans. Gil Green commented that the current process seems to be generating more positive comments than did the writing of the old Owyhee RMP.

## **BREAK**

### **B. Sage Grouse Habitat Management**

(Tom Hemker was not present, but it was noted that the US Fish & Wildlife had issued the “Not Warranted” listing decision regarding sage grouse (in meeting notebook). Mrs. Byrne pointed out the BLM’s news release on its Interim National Strategy for Sage Grouse in the meeting notebook. Rick Raymondi reported on the RAC Sage Grouse Subcommittee’s activities in regard to the BLM National Wind Energy Draft Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement (DPEIS). Comments were collected, a balanced letter was sent, and it appears in the meeting notebook. Mrs. Byrne congratulated the RAC on its efforts and passed along Jack Peterson’s appreciation, along with the observation that the Boise RAC was the only RAC to submit comments. The DPEIS should be out by mid-September. Mr. Peterson told Mrs. Byrne that the map showing BLM, state, and private wind energy proposals across Idaho should be completed in a month or so. He would get copies to Boise RAC members as soon as he gets one.

Mrs. Bennett passed out a brochure produced by the Owyhee Sage Grouse Local Working Group that summarizes its first six years’ work. She discussed local, on-the-ground projects that have been completed plus several that are in the works--including reseedling, telemetry surveys, a landowner survey, habitat studies, and a bird-ladder project. She reported that the decision not to list sage grouse came about primarily because of the existence and work of local working groups in the affected western states. Mrs. Byrne asked that she keep the RAC updated on future projects. Mr. Secrist reported that K Lynn Bennett has committed BLM to continued work on sage grouse habitat improvement whether the bird is ever listed or not. Brenda Richards reported that at the National Cattlemen’s Association, the unanimous feeling is that sage grouse issues must continue to be a high priority, and that local projects need to be continued. Mr. Howard said he hopes BLM will continue to follow the development of wind power as it might threaten sage grouse leks, especially those on high ridges.

### **Public Comments**

Russ Heughins, Issues Coordinator for the Idaho Wildlife Federation spoke. He said he is encouraged by increased sightings of chuckar and sage grouse, and by BLM's continued commitment to protecting them. He said the state conservation plan is on hold, and that Tom Hemker said the public will see the draft in April. He wants RAC to review it, and for the public to hold BLM to what it says it will do. He briefly discussed a National Conference on Sage Grouse Habitat Management in Sparks, Nevada February 12-13, 2005. Several members of local working groups will be attending the conference, including Donna Bennett, Boise RAC member and Owyhee Local Working Group Chairperson. The objective is to help LWG's function better.

Al Logosz, representing the Ada County Fish and Game League, asked Mr. Secrist where the Sweetheart allotments stand. Mr. Secrist said a new Environmental Assessment is being prepared. They were basically starting over and would be ready for comments soon. Hardtrigger will operate one more year under Judge Winmill's interim standards. Battle Creek will go with the 1999 decision for another year because all of their data is five years old and needs to be updated. Share's Basin, according to Ron Kay, is undergoing the required National Environmental Policy Analysis and will stay with the old grazing decision until that is completed. Trout Springs is looking for other alternatives.

Mr. Logosz asked what the BLM was doing about the now seventh year of drought conditions on the public lands in the District. Ron Kay, BLM's Owyhee Field Manager, said they deal with it on a day-to-day, case-by-case basis. Mr. Kay noted that the soil in many areas in Owyhee County is at maximum moisture now, which is quite different from areas closer to the city of Boise. He said no one can predict what the conditions will be like in late spring and into the dryer summer months.

Mr. Logosz said that some allotments have suffered severely and more limiting grazing decisions need to be made by BLM. Mrs. Richards replied that some ranchers have dealt with the drought by voluntarily taking "early-off" measures, or have gone to hay grounds and meadows early. She said they work with the BLM's Range Conservationists who oversee their allotments all the time.

Mr. Logosz: "I appreciate what you said, but what about the allotments where these moves have not been made?" Mrs. Bennett said she's lived here all her life and that it was actually more like a 30-year drought. She said as a whole the ranchers are very aware of the resource and are taking care of it by planning stock reductions, etc.

Mr. Secrist said there was a statewide task force working on drought issues, and that long-term averages don't tell much. Last year was very dry but May showers resulted in good vegetation growth for grazing. This is still hard for irrigators. Mrs. Richards said the Boise newspaper accounts are very different from site-specific conditions out in their area of Owyhee County.

Mr. Howard commented that the BLM says it manages vegetation but he thinks it should manage people. He said vegetation would take care of itself if left alone. He said everyone involved in “multiple use” should take a step back and especially consider the wildlife.

Mr. Heughins stated that the RAC needs to recognize the problems, consider the on-going drought and become part of the conservation process. He referred to a report submitted last year to BLM by a volunteer group of hunters expressing similar concerns about drought conditions.

**ACTION:** Mr. Secrist stated that the April 19 RAC meeting agenda will include a Drought Report and measures to be taken in the Boise District.

Mr. Logosz recommended the RAC ask for a tour of grazing land north of Emmett following the grazing season. Mrs. Richards cautioned that people should not take a post-grazing tour if they have not taken a pre-grazing tour. She said the tour group should include botanists, soil people, and wildlife staff to interpret the findings.

Mr. Heughins would like to help plan the tour instead of having the BLM do all the planning. Mr. Baker wondered what the tour would accomplish. Mr. Robison thought a tour would be informative but wanted a specific objective, and asked which allotments were of concern. Mr. Secrist said he was willing to provide a tour if there was interest in doing it. Mrs. Richards said that it wasn’t just grazing that occurs on the allotments, but that there was recreation, OHV use, wild horse use, hunting, etc. Any tour needed to consider the whole multiple-use concept and all the impacts to the land, vs. just grazing. She said grazing required a permit and was tangible but that other uses were not. Mrs. Bennett wants permittees to know about the tours so that they can respond to possible questions such as when a particular area was last grazed or when the next grazing season was due. Mr. Jaurena agreed that it was a multiple-use question rather than just a grazing question, and that there were many types of grazing areas--resting, delayed, deferred, etc. Mr. Kay recommended that the RAC take a tour of an area that had recently been assessed by an ID team.

### **C. Off-Highway Vehicles and Transportation Management**

Sandra Mitchell said there had been no subcommittee meeting, but that the vast majority of OHV-users want rules and are willing to help in their development. Mr. Kay gave an update and said the Owyhee Front was a priority. Draft documents would be available soon, and he wants more input from interested users. He said more study of the criteria used to designate route use was needed. His office is working on the Hardtrigger, Wilson Peak, and Hemingway Butte areas, and Mr. Jaurena’s office has taken over the Chalk Hills area. Mrs. Richards asked when the permittees would see any maps. They haven’t been contacted to provide information on cattle trails versus other trails. Robert Amidon wondered why trailheads were being put into wild horse areas. Mr. Kay said all the groups still need to meet. Mr. Baker said this issue was one where the “more you

squeeze it the bigger it gets.” He wondered if BLM was trying to provide everyone access to everything.

Frank Jenks, BLM Recreation Planner, explained some of the criteria used to evaluate trail usage. He said BLM had a vision of its ultimate goal: “A sustainable route system that does not destroy the resource.” However it was “a disorderly process” to get there. Brenda Richards said RAC members needed to take some responsibility to educate their constituents about trail usage. Mrs. Bennett stated a publicity campaign was needed similar to the one that serves the Boise Foothills. She said the lack of one makes it seem like the Foothills are precious but that the Owyhee Front was open to anything. Mrs. Griffin said advertisers needed to be educated on responsible advertising. Mr. Robinson said that a good plan was needed today, not a perfect one ten years from now. He suggested that a memo be prepared that summarizes progress on trail plans for each affected area. Mrs. Mitchell said OHV funding was available from National Off-Road Vehicle Coordinating Council.

**ACTION:** Mr. Secrist said he would follow Mr. Robison’s suggestion and get a memo to the RAC.

Mr. Logosz said penalties were needed for damage to public lands, with a sign saying there was \$1000 fine for damage, whether it was enforceable or not. He thinks such signage would be useful and suggested that either BLM or RAC propose this. Mr. Howard cited the need for enforcement but also agreed with penalties. He said he has seen new trails from the air and has seen OHV users running both cattle and antelope. Mr. Baker agreed and asked that if permittees are held accountable for resource damage why aren’t other groups? He said the RAC should start a national movement promoting this idea. Mrs. Bennett cautioned against a “vigilante attitude” and Mrs. Richards remarked that it’s pretty hard to confront users who carry a gun. She said more trained law enforcement officers are needed, and that RAC should study how increased funding could be authorized for these individuals. Mr. Jenks pointed out that there were statutes on the books addressing degradation of property. People can be cited for off-trail use in an area with designated routes. This is why it is imperative to get the route system identified and designated. He also said the Owyhee Initiative has language that funds trail use enforcement in Owyhee County. Mrs. Mitchell said there was a national push among OHV users for stiff fines and legislation. Mrs. Byrne suggested that the RAC try to obtain a copy of the proposed legislation for review by the subcommittee. Mr. Heughins suggested that the RAC study a system like Citizens Against Poaching (CAP). He said the Idaho Wildlife Federation is also interested and involved in formulation of OHV rules. Mr. Baker suggested publicizing the penalties like the National Parks do might be a simple but effective approach.

### **Working Lunch**

***Many thanks to Inez Dawson and Vicky Cox for their help setting out the buffet lunch.***

#### **D. River and Recreation Management**

Mrs. Griffin reported on the subcommittee meeting that was held January 25, 2005, and handed out a preliminary list of possible projects and funding required. This year's priorities are: Deer Creek, Danskin, and the Confluence Launch Site ( **"Confluence Launch Site – Boat Ramp Upgrade"** (in handout). Other priorities could include a washout fund, updating and maintenance projects, and funding for continuation of the 2004 boating safety educational program. Beehive will probably be put into a five-year deferred maintenance plan. She asked RAC for approval of \$30,000 for the prioritized projects, and that the RAC solicit input from the user groups, who were not at the meeting.

Mr. Jenks provided the RAC with a power-point presentation to explain the evolution of the Fee Demo Program under the Federal Lands Recreation Enhancement Act, signed by President Bush in 2004. He also provided a summary, highlighting major points of the new legislation in the meeting notebook. The Act calls for the majority of fees to be invested in projects benefiting sites where the fees were originally collected. It also provides a 10-year multi-agency authority to issue special recreation permits from National Park Service, BLM, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Bureau of Reclamation, and the U.S. Forest Service. An interesting implication is that fees may be used for law enforcement or emergency medical aid as it relates to recreational use on public lands. He said one major concern is that the Act not be used for "fee layering" or just for general use like "setting foot outside the car."

**ACTION:** Mr. Green moved and Mrs. Mitchell seconded that RAC approve the River and Recreation projects recommended by Mrs. Griffin, with the caveat that user groups be contacted for their input. Motion passed. Mrs. Byrne will also communicate to Twinkle Thompson, BLM's National RAC Coordinator, the Boise District RAC feels that its existing River Recreation Subcommittee can fulfill the requirements (for Southwestern Idaho) in the Act that call for chartering of Recreation Advisory Boards.

#### **Hot Topics**

Mr. Secrist said the budget is the biggest hot topic since it is so tight. Of the 150 federal programs to be eliminated under the Bush administration, two of BLM's are the Range Improvement Program and the Rural Fire Assistance Program. Funding for energy development programs, including alternative energy sources, was increased.

He discussed a \$50,000 grant award to construct a greenhouse at the agricultural farm at the Owyhee Combined Schools on the Duck Valley Shoshone-Paiute's Indian Reservation. The goal of the project is to increase native seed production and provide species native to the Great Basin Region for habitat restoration, to customers including the BLM, U.S. Forest Service and various reclamation businesses. This innovative project will enable Owyhee High School youth to gain both scientific knowledge and business and employment experience in fields including economics, math, marketing, advertising, promotion and selling strategies. Profits from sales will be used to continue

and expand the operation of the greenhouse. The Tribe and Elko County School District will enter into a Memorandum of Agreement for the construction and continuation of this project. A secondary partner will be the University of Nevada Cooperative Extension Service who will provide advice and technical expertise for the endeavor. BLM will assist in purchasing plant materials for the greenhouse from the Natural Resource Conservation Service and Lucky Peak Nursery. Mr. Howard expressed his Community's appreciation to Mr. Secrist, BLM's Boise District Manager, for working to take this project from an idea to reality. He also recognized the efforts of Chairman Gibson, Owyhee School Principal Gwen Thacker and Owyhee High School Agriculture teacher and Future Farmers of America Advisor, Jennifer Bieroth. He also noted that in the past BLM has worked with groups of high school students to plant willows in stream banks to assist with riparian improvement efforts. He encouraged BLM to continue these activities with the Owyhee High School students

### **Announcements**

Mrs. Byrne: 1) Idaho Native Plant Society, annual conference, Feb. 15 and 16, at the Idaho Power Company Headquarters in Downtown Boise; 2) Science Review Panel of the State Sage Grouse Plan met on Feb. 1st and 2nd. No feedback as yet. She said the Idaho Conservation Plan is scheduled to be released for public review in April-May 2005; 3) Public meeting on Feb. 10 on proposed fuels reduction and Healthy Forests Act project west of Mullan, Idaho near Grouse Gulch, 7 pm, Best Western Inn, Wallace, ID.

### **District Fire Manager and Field Office Reports**

**A. BD Fire Update**--Andy Delmus, Acting FMO, listed activities:

1) JR Epps to the national office, 2) Pixley Basin hand-cutting, 3) Fuels reduction continuing in Silver City and Juniper Mountain projects, 4) Whiskey Hill Burn this year, Sheep Creek next year, 5) Four engines transferred to Twin Falls for the Jarbidge areas, 6) Budget cuts force reduction in local fire suppression, 7) Will be ten air tankers used nationwide-- most fires will use single-engine planes, 8) "Fire Up" program continuing in Meridian, Eagle, Mountain View, and Centennial high schools, 9) Software program known as "Red Zone analysis" will continue in high schools--Hewlett Packard is the corporate partner and Northern Nazarene University is the academic partner, 10) Fire program analysis is the next stage in the BLM's Fire Management Program.

**ACTION:** Mrs. Richards and Mrs. Bennett will contact Andy Delmas to inquire how to get the "Fire Up" program in Owyhee County schools. **ACTION:** Mr. Delmas will contact Brent Hunter, Fire Management Officer in Duck Valley, to discuss pertinent issues.

**B. Owyhee Field Office:** Mr. Kay, Owyhee Field Office Manager, handed out his new business cards. He reported on the status of litigation regarding the Nickle Creek (extended to April) and Hardtrigger (settled) allotments. He said the major issues seem to be that ranchers generally question how BLM decisions are made and on what data, while the appellants generally question whether BLM followed the proper process.



Application of the National Environmental Policy Act is frequently an issue in the litigation, along with the range-of-alternatives question. Mr. Secrist said in the Boise District alone, \$500,000 had been spent on litigation from BLM's budget. This does NOT include the cost of personnel time. Mr. Jaurena said the Nickle Creek lawsuit alone has cost him five work months that can never be recovered. This means that there will be insufficient funding for work such as the development of the Bruneau Resource Management Plan (RMP) and OHV trail designations. He also said the hard work done by the cooperating ranchers and BLM in the Lepidium Agreement is still facing two lawsuit challenges. Mr. Kay also reported that the Biological Assessment for the snails issue was targeted for June, and the Flint and the Elephant Butte Land Sales were almost complete. Chris Salove congratulated the two new field office managers for their hard work and the increased presence of BLM personnel in the field.

**C. Bruneau Field Office:** Mr. Jaurena discussed his office's budget and staff reorganization, along with some of the same issues reported earlier. He said the Raft River Power Line Project will consist of 60' poles that basically follow the highway to Duck Valley, except for a detour around the Grasmere airstrip. He said it is a "cost-recovery" project.

**D. Four Rivers Field Office:** Ms. Thomas reported she is working on the following: 1) standards and guides; 2) Birds of Prey RMP; 3) Goodrich field assessments; 4) possible delisting of snails; 5) two wind energy applications still in the "talking" phase; 6) two geothermal applications near Weiser; 7) power line projects; 8) land sales or transfers including a US Ecology landfill near Halverson Lake, Idaho, Waste Systems landfill buffer on Simco Road, Pickle Butte buffer in Canyon County, Northern Idaho-Boise Foothills land exchange, a new Interstate 95 re-route north of Emmett, a Dewey Road extension that may go through a lepidium area, and a Sinker Road extension west of Celebration Park; 9) Ada County Parks and Recreation trail system above Veteran's Cemetery; 10) Southern Idaho Ground Squirrel; 11) riparian actions; 12) lepidium monitoring; 13) the Ridge to Rivers Trail Program; and 14) a stewardship program on Bennett Mountain that went to a timber trespass.

**Public Comments:** none

**Follow-up Actions**

RAC orientation date is Wednesday, March 2, 2005, 9 am, Boise District.

**ACTION:** Mrs. Byrne will mail orientation binders to Mr. Robinson, Mrs. Mitchell, Mr. Green, and Mr. Baker.

Next two RAC regular meetings: April 19 and August 23, 2005. A float trip down the Jarbidge River was again requested by the RAC.

## **Meeting adjourned**

Mr. Secrist invited those interested to a tour of the new Marsing Field Office located next door to the Community Center, immediately following the meeting.

Minutes prepared by  
Becky Desmond, Note taker

Certified by

/S/ date 4-19,05  
Don Weilmunster  
RAC Chairman

/S/ date 4-20-05  
Glen Secrist  
District Manager, BD

## **Appendix (All in meeting notebook unless indicated as handout.)**

1. NCA RMP/EIS Completion Schedule--Mike O'Donnell handout.
2. Payette River Fee Authority Project Proposals--Donna Griffin handout.
3. Owyhee County Sage Grouse LWG brochure--Donna Bennett handout.
4. BLM Budget Fiscal Year 2006--meeting notebook, inside front.
5. BLM Sage Grouse Interim Strategy news release.
6. US F&W news release on "not warranted" listing for sage grouse.
7. US F&W questions and answers on 12-month finding, sage grouse.
8. Memo from Jack Peterson re: Wind EIS update.
9. BD RAC response letter to Draft Wind Energy EIS.
10. Payette River Fee Authority Projects accomplished as of 1/10/05.
11. Federal Lands Recreation Enhancement Act--What it means to BLM.
12. Owyhee Commissioners to Washington DC for Owyhee Initiative news item.
13. BLM news release on budget.
14. BLM Fact Sheet.
15. BLM news release on fiscal year 2004 accomplishments.
16. BLM 2004 Idaho Update brochure.
17. Seasonal Employment with BLM in Idaho.
18. Wild Horse Seminar news item.